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**Sandhya and Kama  
Enduring Embodiments of Purity and Love**

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Hinduism goes far beyond being a mere religion - it can be described as an attitude; a philosophy; even a way of life! Hindu mythology brings us several interesting tales and legends, many of which contain hidden lessons for life itself. These entertaining and enriching stories of Gods and Goddesses; kings and queens; princes and princesses; even ordinary human beings; educate us on ethics, values and morals that we must uphold, in order to have a peaceful, joyful and fulfilling existence.

Such is the tale of Sandhya and Kama, siblings, who took birth from the mind of the Prajapati, Lord Brahma himself. Displaying extraordinary qualities, their lives have come to become enduring embodiments of love, purity, integrity and chastity.

Let us now take a look at the life and times of Sandhya and Kamadeva.

## **Kamadeva**

Kamadeva, also known as Kama or Manmatha, is the Hindu God of love or desire. His name comes from the Sanskrit words, 'Kama' (love or desire) and 'Deva' (God). Hence, this deva is associated with human desire, love, lust and/or longing and often implies sensual or sexual love. He is often portrayed holding a bow and arrows and is accompanied by his partner, Rati.

According to the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavata Purana, Kamadeva is a name of Vishnu, Krishna and Shiva as well. kama is also a name given to Agni (God of Fire) in the Atharva Veda. Interestingly, some legends associate Lord Krishna's son, Pradyumna, as a reincarnation of Kama.

Other names of Kama include Manmatha (the one who agitates), Atanu (the one without a body), Ananga (the incorporeal), Ragavrinda (the stalk of passion), Ratikanta (Lord of Rati), Madana (the intoxicating one), Manasija (the one born of mind), Kandarpa (the inflamer of passion), Pushpavaana, Pushpadhanva, Kusumashara (the one carrying arrows made of flowers) and Abhipura.

## Iconography

Kama is depicted as a youthful, handsome man with green skin. He rides a parrot and wields a bow, made of sugarcane, with a string of honeybees. His floral arrows are made of five types of fragrant flowers. These flowers include Ashoka flowers, white and blue lotuses, Mallika plant (Jasmine) and Mango tree flowers. The names of his arrows are Harshana, Rochana, Mohana, Shoshana and Marana, indicative of the various stages of feelings that one goes through, while one is in love.

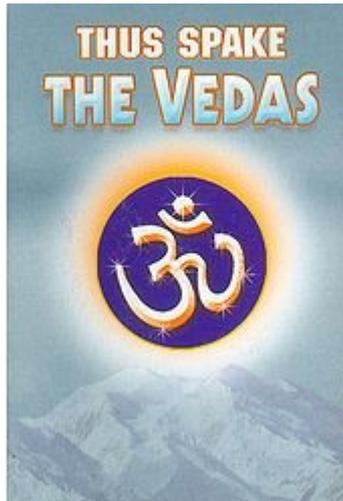


Kama Deva - God of Love - Statue

Apart from his partner, Rati, his companions are a cuckoo, parrot, humming bees, a gentle and cool breeze and Vasanta, the vibrant season of spring. It is believed that the Goddess Vasanta emerged from a sigh of frustration! His festival is celebrated as Holi, Holika or Vasanta.

## Early Mentions

Legends about Kama can be traced right back to the Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda. The Puranas also make prominent mention of this God of Love. He participates in Puranic battles, along with his troops of soldiers. According to the Shiva Purana, he is the Manasaputra (one who emanated from the mind) of Brahma. In the Skanda Purana, he is a brother of Prasuti, and a son of Shatarupa, who was created by Brahma. In yet other texts, he is considered to be the son of Vishnu.



Thus Spake The Vedas - Book

Kama also receives mention in the 12th century Javanese poem, Smaradahan, which relates the tale of Kamadeva burning by Shiva's anger and his fall from heaven to the earth. Kama and Rati are referenced as Kamajaya and Kamarati in Kakawin poetry and some later works as well.

## In Mythology

Kama is the husband of Rati, who is the daughter of Daksha. Legend has it that she was created from Daksha's sweat. She is the very essence of desire and carries a discus and a lotus. Her slim arms are compared to lotus-stalks. Though she is his partner, she is only a minor character in his story.

Different Puranas record different versions of Kamadeva's birth. According to the Mahabharata, a Prajapati named Dharma was born from the right breast of Brahma. He had three sons, Sama, Kama and Harsa. In some versions, Kama arises from the mind of Brahma. In yet others, he is the son of Sri. Some legends portray him as being in the service of Lord Indra.

## Shiva Incinerates Kama

One of the major legends associated with Kama is that of his incineration by Lord Shiva. In the narrative, Indra and the Gods were suffering at the hands of the terrible demon, Tarakasura. The demon had a boon that he could not be defeated by anyone other than Shiva's son. At that time, Shiva had lost his wife, Sati, and was disillusioned with Samsara (worldly life) and all that it had to offer. He shut himself out from everyone and everything and immersed himself in deep meditation in the Himalayas.

Sati reincarnated as Parvati, the daughter of King Himavan. From a very young age, she held a deep fascination and love for Shiva and longed to marry him. Shiva, though, continued to be immersed in meditation and did not care for her presence around him.



Parvati Worshipping Shiva - Picture

Brahma knew that only their offspring could destroy Taraka. Hence, wanting the union of the two, he advised Parvati to seduce Shiva. She tried everything to woo him. She would visit his cave every day, clean it, place a garland of fresh flowers around his neck, sit at his feet and meditate for hours on end.

When he still failed to respond, she took a vow to stay totally off food and water. She then stripped herself of her clothing and, in that biting cold, proceeded to go into deep meditation for days on end. She was then known as Aparna and Uma.

When all of Parvati's efforts failed, Indra assigned Kamadeva to the task of breaking Shiva's penance and get him attracted to Parvati. In order to create the right atmosphere, Kama created the spring season. He also took the form of a fragrant southern breeze in order to evade Nandi and enter Shiva's abode. Then, one by one, he started shooting his floral arrows at Shiva.

When Shiva was awoken by Kama's arrow, he was absolutely furious. Being famous for his fiery temper, he raged on, looking for the person who disturbed him from his penance. When he sighted Madana (Kama), Shiva opened his third eye, from which emanated streams of fire, which instantly turned the former into ash.



Ravi Varma Shiva Burning Kamadeva Poster

Shiva then spied a frightened and horrified Parvati standing by the side and asked her how he could help her. A grief-stricken Rati ran up to Shiva, pleading him to revive her dead husband. She tried to make him understand that it was not his fault and that he had shot the arrows only on the behest of the Gods. To date, Kama is offered fresh mango and sandalwood paste as an offering to cool down the burns inflicted by Shiva.

Shiva relented and agreed that he would bring Kama back to life, under one condition; that he would live on in a disembodied form. Shiva and Parvati together resuscitated him. Hence, Kama is also called Ananga or Atanu. The spirit of Kama is now spread all over the cosmos, touching and affecting every living being with its powerful, though unseen, presence.

In the meantime, the arrow that Kama had shot at Shiva took effect and made him fall in love with Parvati. They united in holy matrimony and later created their son, Kartikeya (or Murugan), who went on to fulfill his mission of destroy Tarakasura.



Murugan Framed Picture

## Kama Reincarnates as Pradyumna

According to the Matsya Purana, after Kama was incinerated by Shiva, he reincarnated in the womb of Krishna's wife, Rukmini. He was named Pradyumna.

### Invoking Kama

It is believed that, in order to invoke Kama and make a person fall in love with you, you need to chant the powerful 'Kleem' mantra. Some say that chanting of this mantra 108 times every day, for 21 days, during the early morning hours, thinking of your loved one, will result in that person feeling the same love for you.

Believers claim that this mantra not only creates love, but also helps couples stay in love over a long period of time, resulting in a happy union. One important thing, they say, is that the practitioner must necessarily keep away from consuming alcohol and non-vegetarian food during this 21-day period.

They say that the mantra greatly benefits all types of performing artists as well, since it gives them added grace and charisma; also helping them perform better in their field.

### Worship and Rituals

Kama and Rati prominently feature in several Hindu rituals and ceremonies. During a Hindu marriage ceremony, the bride's feet are often painted with images of Suka, the parrot, which is the vehicle of Kama.

Kama also features in several legends and is venerated by those seeking health, beauty, spouses and children.

### In Gaudiya Vaishnavism

In Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Kamadeva is considered to have incarnated as Krishna's son, Pradyumna. Hence, he is believed to have many of Krishna's qualities, such as color, appearance and beauty, to name a few.

Here, Krishna becomes the spiritual Kama, the ever-youthful, ever-handsome transcendental God of Vrindavana. He is love itself and yet, remains detached from mundane love and the one who is worshipped with the Kama-Gayathri and Kama-Bija mantras.

Krishna was deeply loved and adored by the Gopis. Yet, their love was pure and shorn of all lust and worldliness. Likewise, the love of Krishna and Radha is unparalleled in the entire Universe. Though she loved him with her whole being, her power often managed to defeat the powers of Lord Kamadeva himself.

## Temples

There are few and lesser-known temples of Kama in India. They include the following:

- The Madan Kamdev Temple in Baihata Chariali, Kamrup district in Assam
- The Kameshwara Temple in Aragalur - it is believed that Kama awoke Shiva from his meditation in this location
- The Kameshwara Temple in Kamyavan, one of the forests of Vrindavana
- The Soundararaja Perumal Temple at Thadikombu, near Dindigul, Tamil Nadu
- The Harsat-Mata Temple at Abhaneri

## In Other Cultures

The God of Love features prominently in several other global cultures as well. In Greek mythology, he is known as Eros, the God of sexual attraction. His Roman counterpart is Cupid. Some myths exalt him as a primordial God. In yet other myths, he is the son of Aphrodite, the ancient Greek Goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation.



Musician Cupid

In Greek mythology, he is also one of the Erotes, the winged love Gods, associated with love and sexual intercourse. The Erotes manifested in Hellenistic and Roman art in the alternate forms of Cupids and Psyches. Later, Erotes went on to become a permanent part of Western art, in the forms of multiple types of Cupids, Amorini and Amoretti.

## Sandhya

Legend has it that Lord Brahma, the Creator of the Universe, was once holding his court, with all the Devas. All of a sudden, a beautiful female sprung out of his heart, followed by a handsome young man, who was holding a bow and flower-headed arrows in his quiver. The young man requested Brahma to specify his duty. The latter told him to romantically charge all creatures with his fragrant flower arrows.



Brahma - Poster

Then Brahma proclaimed that no one, not even the most powerful Devas, would be able to escape the effect of those arrows. The handsome youth was named Kamawas and was also called Manmatha, the Enchanter. He could effortlessly bewitch anyone that he set his eyes on.

Kama himself was immensely attracted to the beautiful Sandhya. Filled with false pride, he decided to test the efficacy of Brahma's boon. He shot his arrows at all present in the court. They immediately had a profound effect on everyone, including Brahma and Sandhya. Brahma became infatuated with Sandhya and lustily ogled. Even Sandhya was clearly exhibiting flawed behavior.

Watching all this occurring in court, Dharma, the God of Righteousness, found it rather shameful and could not stand it. He prayed to Lord Shiva to manifest himself and set the atmosphere right again.

Bristling in shame due to his own behavior; also fearing a rebuke from Shiva; Brahma started sweating profusely. The sweat shed by him gave rise to the 64 Pitrujanas or Progenitors, who came to be known as Agnistomas.

Then, the beautiful female was called Sandhya, the One who was born out of the deep concentration of Lord Brahma. Shiva appeared in front of Brahma and rebuked him for creating Kama and giving rise to such an erotic environment during a formal, serious session.



Shiva - Statue

As Sandhya watched Shiva, she became the recipient of his grace and gained the knowledge of his mysticism. She later came to be recognized as the Mother of the Pitruganas.

## Brahma Curses Kama

In the meantime, Brahma, still bristling in humiliation at being rebuffed by Shiva, cursed Kama that he would be burnt to ashes by Shiva's Third Eye. This shocked Kama, who, prayed in fear to Brahma, saying that it was not his fault. He had merely discharged the duty that had been delegated to him by Brahma himself.

Brahma understood his plight, but reasoned that it was not right of Kama to create such scenes of lust or orgy in court. Though sexual urges could distract anyone and everyone, some discipline and moderation was required to regulate human behavior. Brahma then relented and said that Shiva himself would find a way to save Kama.

At the very same time, Daksha shed a drop of sweat, which transformed into a striking, perfectly structured damsel, with incredible beauty and grace. Her name was Rati. The moment Kama set his eyes on her; he fell deeply and passionately in love with her. Their union was later solemnized by Daksha and Brahma.

## Sandhya Undertakes Severe Penance

Having had the darshan of Lord Shiva the minute she was created, Sandhya was naturally inclined to undertake severe and austere penance in order to attain his grace. She felt guilty and blamed herself for creating intense feelings of passion and lust for all the males that set their eyes on her. She felt especially bad that she had aroused the same in her own brother, Kama and father, Lord Brahma. For that, she took a vow to burn herself to death.

In the meantime, Daksha gave all his 27 daughters to Chandradeva in marriage. They were all

stars and constellations and were given corresponding names such as Ashwani, Rohini, Revati and so on. Of all his wives, Chandradeva loved Rohini the most. The other 26 women resented this discrimination and complained to Brahma about it. He took them to Sandhya, who was engaged in deep penance.

After ages, Shiva materialized before her and granted her three boons, which she asked for. They were as follows...

- Human beings would become conscious of sexual desire only after attaining puberty
- She would be regarded as the greatest devotee ever known; the one who undertook the most austere penance ever
- She would beget a good husband and any other man who cast a lustful glance at her would turn into a eunuch

## **Sandhya is Reborn as Arundhati**

After bestowing those boons upon her, Shiva advised Sandhya to go to the banks of river Chandrabhaga, where Sage Medhatithi was conducting a 12-year long yagna (sacrificial fire ritual) to absolve Chandradeva of the curse that Daksha had put on him, for subjecting his daughters to injustice. Shiva told Sandhya that, once there, she would be able to fulfill her vow.

He said that she would be able to attain the husband she wanted, if she thought of him before jumping into the fire. He also assured her that she would become invisible and hence, would be able to fulfill her vow without anyone seeing her.

Sandhya did as advised. She visited the yagna and was immediately drawn to a radiant Brahmin there. He was in fact sage Vasishtha. She thought of him and jumped into the holy pit of the flaming Jyotisthomayajna. The fire burnt her body and carried it deep into the solar system. Her pranashakti (soul energy) was absorbed by Lord Shiva himself. Then, Suryadeva (the Sun God) divided her body into three parts, namely, Pratah-Sandhya, Madhyanha-Sandhya and Sayam-Sandhya, and established them in his chariot.

When the yagna ended, she emerged from the havankund (holy pit) as a beautiful girl with a glowing body. Everyone present there was stunned to see this fetching lass who had the effulgence of gold. Realizing that this was divine will, sage Medhatithi adopted her as his daughter, giving her the name, Arundhati.

Arundhati stayed with Sage Vasishtha and gained spiritual knowledge from him. She adored him both as a Guru and as a human being. At the age of five, she declared that she would accept only him as her husband. Brahma, along with the major sages and seers worked to unite Vasishtha and Arundhati. Thus, Arundhati got the husband that she wished for. She went on to have a happy life and became an enduring example of chastity.

## Birth and Life

According to the Bhagavata Purana, Arundhati was the eighth daughter of Kardama and Devahuti. She is the grandmother of Parashara and great-grandmother of sage Vyasa. The Shiva Purana talks about her as being Sandhya in her previous birth. Having jumped into Medhatithi's yagna fire, she was then born as his daughter and married Vasishtha, as is mentioned above. Some other Puranas describe her as the daughter of Kashyapa and sister of Narada and Parvata. She was then offered in marriage to Vasishtha by Narada.

According to the Valmiki Ramayana, she gave birth to hundred sons. Unfortunately, they were all cursed by Vishwamitra and breathed their last, far before their time. She then bore two other sons, named Shakti and Suyagya. They both studied with Rama at Vasishtha's hermitage. Some other sources relate that she had eight sons, including Shakti and Chitraketu.

## In Mythology

Arundhati prominently features in several legends of Hindu mythology.

- The legend of her birth can be found in the Shiva Purana and the Bhagavata Purana
- The infamous rivalry between sages Vishwamitra and Vasishtha, which led to the untimely demise of her hundred sons, is described in the Bala Kanda of Valmiki's Ramayana
- The Mahabharata is one among many treatises which talk about her sons and grandson, Parashara
- The Mahabharata further describes her as a Sanyasin (ascetic), who used to even give discourses to the Saptarishis (Seven Sages). She was so powerful that Swaha, the consort of Agni could assume the form of the wives of the other six Rishis, but could never take the form of Arundhati. The epic also extols her for her purity and chastity .

## In Hindu Astronomy and Marriage Rituals

- As per Hindu astronomy, pair of Mizar and Alcor in constellation Ursa Major is known as Vasishtha and Arundhati
- The Arundhati star is only faintly visible. Due to this, it is believed that one cannot see it when one nears their time of death
- Due to its faintness, this star is shown in steps, with the first showing the brightest stars and then to the Arundhati star
- In one of the traditional Hindu marriage rituals, the groom shows the bride the pair of stars as the most ideal couple, who embody chastity and conjugal bliss
- On the second bright day of the lunar month of Chaitra, Hindu women belonging to certain sects observe a fast in her honor. It is believed that this vrat protects their sumangli (married) status

## In Literature

- The instructions given to her by Brahma are described in detail in the Uttara Kanda of the Sri Ramcharitmanas
- Arundhati's meetings with Sita and Rama are described in detail in the Ramayana, Sri Ramcharitmanas and Vinaya Patrika
- The epic poem, Kumarasambhavam, penned by Kalidasa, mentions Arundhati as well. Here, she is described as being one of the prime influencers, who convinced Shiva to wed Parvati. The sixth canto of the treatise relates this episode in detail
- The eponymous epic poem in Hindi, composed by Jagadguru Rambhadracharya, beautifully describes the life of Arundhati

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